the decision. However, the footnote to Fassberg's work (n. 31) only states that more information about its possible function can be found in his work. It would have been helpful for the reader if he had summarized his findings and not just provided the reference. Three, where the second edition reorganized its paragraphing, it has clarified sense and improved the user's overall experience with the grammar. However, for those who have worked with the first edition extensively, it may at times difficult to find the new paragraph number, as one was used to find a certain grammatical phenomenon in a different section. Fortunately, the improved Indexes and Table of Contents help in the process. Still, the reader will appreciate if a reorganization of the paragraphing can be prevented in a third edition. Four, my last point is not about the book, but the publisher. While the quality of this grammar lies also in its pedagogical value, as it can be used for teaching Hebrew and, more particularly, the instruction of advanced Hebrew at university level, it is very unfortunate that the publisher is unwilling to equip professors with desk copies, even when the book is required reading in the class.

Finally, the *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* remains a fine product and the only up-to-date work in the world of Hebrew grammars. In contrast to other grammars, it seeks to be informed not only by philological research, but modern linguistics. It is this quality that has attracted many Bible translators and scholars, as well as helped establish this reference grammar as a standard in the field. Its referential quality has prompted this grammar to become a textbook for Hebrew classes. Its benefits are obvious in that when students learn biblical Hebrew with classical textbooks, they won't find much value in them anymore once they have passed their exams. The pedagogical organization of grammar in textbooks disqualifies them as reference works. In reverse, a reference grammar is not pedagogically organized. But where students and instructors teach and learn in alternative ways (e.g., text-driven approach), this book becomes *the* grammar. When students learn Hebrew from the very beginning with this reference grammar, the material will accompany them throughout their career and remain of value even long after they have passed their Hebrew exams. And speaking about exams, studying this reference grammar is an excellent means to pass any Hebrew exam.

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Nongbri, Brent. *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. ix + 416 pp. Hardcover. USD 35.00.

Brent Nongbri is an Honorary Research Fellow at Macquarie University. Nongbri's book on *God's Library* is the culmination of his research undertaken at Macquarie University, Australia, under the Department of Ancient

History and the Centre for the Study of Early Christianity. Additionally, this book is a result of his many researches at several academic libraries around the world. The book is divided into *Prologue*, seven chapters, an *Epilogue* with an appendix on Oxyrhynchus manuscripts, thirty pages of endnotes, an extra thirty pages dedicated to bibliography, and finally, the subject and manuscript index. The chapters are titled as follows: "Reintroducing the Earliest Christian Manuscripts" (Prologue); "The Early Christian Book" (ch. 1); "The Dating Game" (ch. 2); "Finding Early Christian Books in Egypt" (ch. 3); "A Discovery Which Threw All Others in the Shade: The Beatty Biblical Papyri" (ch. 4); "An Elusive Collection: The Bodmer Papyri" (ch. 5); "Excavating Christian Litter and Literature at Oxyrhynchus" (ch. 6); "Fabricating a Second-Century Codex of the Four Gospels" (ch. 7); and "The Future of Ancient Christian Books" (Epilogue). Nongbri references the manuscripts under investigation using the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB). He uses the available manuscripts as well as the published records about the collections in order to investigate claims about their origin.

One of the main ideas Nonbgri explores is the use of paleography alone to date the various papyri and codices. He argues that this has led to exaggerated conclusions. Biblical and early Christian manuscripts are often studied by biblical scholars, more specifically the text-critics, whose primary interest is in the reconstruction of the original text of the New Testament. While he does not criticize this endeavor, he does criticize the fact that biblical scholars tend to either downplay or ignore the fact that the *provenance* of these manuscripts is ultimately unknown. If the provenance is accepted as "known," then it is based on dubious information provided by informants in the black market. Another point of contention is that the biblical and Christian manuscripts are often isolated from the rest of the works found with them. And, once isolated, they are studied through the lenses of a biblical scholar—one who wants to see an early text of a NT book.

In the Prologue, Nongbri introduces the reader to the discovery of these manuscripts and and the early sensation this produced during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. He explains how scholars kept adjusting the date of the manuscripts with a discrepancy of several hundred years. He continues by describing how the story of the discovery of these manuscripts kept changing. He uses the example of the Freer collection to show how narratives about the discovery of these manuscripts changed regarding their date and provenance, depending on who provided the information. Nongbri also shows how the media sensationalized these discoveries and how the it influenced scholarship to some degree. Scholars relied on paleographic analysis in order to ascertain their date of origin, dates that would change depending on who analyzed them, even sometimes dated several hundred years apart. In essence, both the date and provenance of the manuscripts remain a mystery.

The next three chapters form the first half of the book. In chapter one, "The Early Christian Book," Nongbri describes the history of the formation and transmission of early Christian codices. He provides an overview of the different materials used, as well as diagrams and photos to help illustrate the concepts such as how sheets are sown together, how covers are created, and more. The illustrations are made up of black-and-white photos of good quality, and help the reader make sense of the technical descriptions. For example, Nongbri describes and illustrates the difference between single-quire codices and multi-quire codices and discusses why this is important for studying the early Christian codex.

Chapter two, "The Dating Game," is a description of how papyrologists classify and date early Christian papyri and codices and the presuppositions that play a role in those dates. He makes an important point by comparing what information papyrologists expect to glean from a given set of manuscripts. Next he provides a description of the use of radiocarbon dating (henceforth, C-14) with the benefits and issues that arise from C-14 dating. Nongbri is fair in his analysis when it comes to using C-14 results. While he does see benefits of C-14 dating, he also shows that even this method provides only a date *range*—not exact dates. He challenges scholars to be careful with the rhetoric they use when utilizing C-14 results, since the conclusions of scholars often sound far more exact than what the results allow.

Chapter three, "Finding Early Christian Books in Egypt," explores how and why so many important manuscripts were discovered in Egypt. Nongbri describes manuscripts that were found in various contexts: Christian books found with bodies, in caves, houses or buildings, and in or around monastic dwellings. For example, he describes one codex that was found in a tomb between 1886–1887 and which contained part of the Apocalypse of Enoch, the Gospel According to Peter, and the Apocalypse of Julian of Anazarbus. Nongbri goes on to describe a little information about the tomb or the circumstances of the find in general. The body in the tomb was identified as a monk, but other than the codex found with the body, no data was given that would identify the body as a monk. He continues with other examples that show how sparse information and an agitated media influenced scholarly opinion.

Chapter four is an investigation of the Chester Beatty collection. Nongbri provides a brief history of their acquisition, which includes accounts from the buyers who aided the collector, as well as information provided by the sellers in the Egyptian markets—and the stories are often conflicting. These bits of information help the reader understand Nongbri's skepticism about the provenance and ultimately the date of the manuscripts. In each chapter, he also provides charts with the various biblical manuscripts that contain a summary of important data. For example, in chapters four and five, he provides tables that include the language *roll* or *codex*, its contents,

dimensions, material, and proposed dates, which, in some cases, shows his own assessment of the date. For example, he dates P.Bodmer ii to the fourth century (Table 5.1)—a manuscript that has been dated as early as the second century. The charts he created for the Oxyrhynchus papyri are given in tables organized in different ways, such as rolls compared to codices, dates for the rolls compared to the codices, and a summary of the contents in both. A more detailed table of Oxyryhnchus data is found in the Appendix.

The reader should not see this book as an archaeological background for the three collections, namely the Chester Beatty, Bodmer, and Oxyryhnchus collections. While Nongbri does provide information from published material on the archaeological data of each, it is precisely the lack of archaeological information about their origin that gave the impetus for his book. Often what is known about these manuscripts is, in fact, dubious and/or based on conflicting stories. In his Epilogue, "The Future of the Ancient Christian Book," Nongbri uses the example of the Philo Codex to illustrate how stories begin erroneously (not necessarily maliciously), and how conclusions are based on this erroneous information that ends up dominating much of scholarship. Using this example, he argues that when the provenance cannot be known, scholars should be more forthcoming about the ambiguity of the provenance, and this goes double for dates. He makes the point that biblical scholars are too eager to argue for an early date, such as the second century, when such a date is only possible, but far from certain. Since the possibility exists, scholars tend to succumb to temptation and fix conclusions on the earlier date without reference to a later date, such as the fourth century, when such a date is just as plausible. He points out that one of the main problems that interferes with archaeological research, C-14 analysis in particular, is due to the non-destructive policies institutions have regarding their manuscripts. These policies are understandable; however, he believes there is room for some exceptions, especially in cases where a portion of a manuscript could be removed without damaging the text itself. This type of research would certainly help narrow down dates to some degree. Nongbri offers a way forward: first, universities, libraries, and museums should allow more and/or better access to records that document how these collections were acquired; and, second, these same institutions need to digitize their collections. While inspecting these manuscripts firsthand is the best option, Nongbri recognizes that this is impossible for most people.

Nongbri's book provides a sobering check on the bold claims for early dates regarding some of the most important papyri and codices. After reading, one gets the impression that there have been major paradigm shifts in the scholarly discussion at the level Thomas Kuhn describes, but on vague or, worse yet, completely erroneous information. Nongbri's book is well documented. He admits that his position is pessimistic. After reading Nongbri's research, it is easy to see why. The issues that have been referred to in this review are only

a few compared to the many observations Nonbgri makes. This book would be a worthwhile text for those entering into the foray of manuscript studies, text-critical studies, and early Christian texts in particular.

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Price, Randall and H. Wayne House. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology: A Book by Book Guide to Archaeological Discoveries Related to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 416 pp. Hardcover. USD 42.99.

Randall Price, Th.M. in Old Testament and Semitic Languages from Dallas Theological Seminary and Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Texas at Austin, is Distinguished Research Professor of Biblical and Judaic Studies and Executive Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at Liberty University. He is currently a co-director in the Operation Scroll Project at Qumran. Dr. Price has either authored or co-authored over thirty books. Within the field of archaeology, he is the author of popular books, including *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), and *Rose Guide to the Temple* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2012).

H. Wayne House, Th.D. in Exegetical Theology from Concordia Seminary and J.D. in Law from Regent University School of Law, is Distinguished Research Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Faith Evangelical College and Seminary. Former professor of law at Trinity Law School, Trinity International University, Dr. House has authored and edited many books, including *Inteligent Design 101: Leading Experts Explain the Key Issues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), *Reasons for Our Hope: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), and the resourceful three volumes of the Zondervan Charts Library, *Charts of Cults, Sects, and Religious Movements* (1992), *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences* (2006), and *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (2019).

Randall Price and H. Wayne House state that their approach in the *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* is "to provide a window to the biblical past through the information available from the field of archaeology" (16). They claim that the archaeological evidence supports a "historical and literal interpretation of the biblical events" (15), but the writing of this book is done in such a way to allow each reader to draw his own conclusion. They chose to give priority to the most recent archaeological discoveries, while not neglecting what they believe are the most important historical archaeological discoveries. They decided to organize the archaeological finds according to the canonical order of Scripture in order to demonstrate how useful the field of archaeology is to the field of biblical studies and to make the information both accessible and practical. Price and House state that their hope is that